

Levels of Review by Community Stakeholders

To increase their effectiveness, groups made up of community stakeholders often determine in advance the level of review they wish to carry out in response to the proposed actions or options that are placed before them. Reviews can range from a simple exchange of information to a complex fact-gathering, consensus-building process that can require several meetings.

Agreement by stakeholders on the nature of the review process helps guarantee that the necessary materials will be assembled in advance and that time will be available to carry out the work that is anticipated. At each review stage, the time commitment grows, as does the need for a review process that is sufficiently structured to sort out varying viewpoints.

▪ **LEVEL ONE: INFORMATION ONLY**

At this level, members of the stakeholder group are focused entirely on receiving information that is useful to them and to other members of the community. Information should be clearly presented and easily decipherable. Clarifying questions are appropriate, but the time available for discussion is limited.

▪ **LEVEL TWO: INFORMATION AND COMMENT**

At this level, the City of Seattle or other presenter of the information is expecting to receive feedback from stakeholders on the information presented. In nearly all cases, written materials are provided in advance so that the feedback process is enhanced. Comments are made by individual stakeholders. Neither the chair nor the facilitator seeks to shape consensus from this individual comments, but common themes or responses may well be identified.

▪ **LEVEL THREE: EVALUATION OF APPROACH**

At this level, stakeholders are intent on reviewing the process through which the City of Seattle or other presenter is intended to proceed. Often, multiple steps or options are under review. The stakeholders are less intent on determining which specific step or option should be taken, and more focused on how the City of Seattle or other party should decide. The chair or facilitator seeks the individual response (and where possible

the collective response) of the stakeholders to questions like these: What additional information should be gathered? What should be the City's goals be as they sort out the options? Are there specific criteria that the stakeholders recommend that the City utilize in determining how to proceed?

- **LEVEL FOUR: NARROWING OPTIONS**

At this level, stakeholders choose to carry out the intensive review that would make possible the development of a collective recommendation on options that the City or other presenter should eliminate. Or, stakeholders comment in detail on the relative merits and demerits of specific options. The stakeholders are not only devising criteria for the City's use in reviewing options, they are applying those same criteria. In this process, consensus is sought, and stakeholders consider formal recommendations to pass on to the Mayor and City Council, and to report to the public at community meetings. If consensus is not gained, recommendations can be transmitted with minority opinions attached.

- **LEVEL FIVE: RECOMMENDING A SINGLE OPTION**

At this level, which requires a further level of analysis and deliberation, the stakeholders seek consensus on a single course of action to recommend to the Mayor and City Council and report to the public. As in the case where options are narrowed, the recommendation process is formal. If consensus is not gained, recommendations can be transmitted with minority opinions attached.